

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Claims 1-2 (canceled)

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Claim 3 (currently amended): Use of a surface coating to increase the surface tension of ~~objects~~ at least one solid object of an analytical test element having a surface, wherein the surface coating is obtained by the steps of:

depositing a layer of at least one element that can be oxidized with water or an alloy that can be oxidized with water on the surface of the solid object to form a deposited layer, and

subsequently applying boiling water or water vapour on the deposited layer, whereby the resulting deposited layer is solid and more hydrophilic than the surface of the solid object.

Claim 4 (currently amended): Use of a surface coating to increase the surface tension of ~~objects~~ at least one solid object of an analytical test element having a surface, wherein the surface coating is obtained by the steps of:

depositing on the surface a layer of at least one element that can be oxidized with water or an alloy that can be oxidized with water and

subsequently applying superheated water vapour to the deposited layer, whereby the resulting deposited layer is solid and more hydrophilic than the surface of the solid object.

Claim 5 (previously amended): Use of a surface coating as claimed in claim 3, wherein the element is derived from at least one element selected from the group consisting of Al, Si, Ti, V, Cr, Mn, Fe, Co, Ni, Zn, Ga, Ge, Zr, Nb, Cd, In, Sn, Sb.

Claim 6 (previously amended): Use of a surface coating as claimed in claim 5, wherein the element is derived from at least one element selected from the group consisting of Al, Si, Ti, Zr.

Claim 7 (original): Use of a surface coating as claimed in claim 6, wherein the element is Al.

Claim 8 (previously amended): Use of a surface coating as claimed in claim 3, wherein the alloy contains at least two components selected from the group of elements consisting of Al, Si, Ti, V, Cr, Mn, Fe, Co, Ni, Zn, Ga, Ge, Zr, Nb, Cd, In, Sn, Sb.

Claim 9 (previously amended): Use of a surface coating as claimed in claim 3, wherein the alloy contains at least one component selected from a first group of elements consisting of Al, Si, Ti, V, Cr, Mn, Fe, Co, Ni, Zn, Ga, Ge, Zr, Nb, Cd, In, Sn, Sb, which are alloyed with at least one element selected from a second group of elements consisting of Mg, Ca, Sr, Ba.

Claim 10 (previously amended): Use of a surface coating as claimed in claim 9, wherein the alloy contains at least one component selected from a first group consisting of Al, Si, Ti, Zr, which is alloyed with at least one element selected from a second group consisting of Mg, Ca, Sr, Ba.

Claim 11 (previously amended): Use of a surface coating as claimed in claim 10, wherein the alloy is composed of Al which is alloyed with at least one element selected from the group consisting of Mg, Ca, Sr, Ba.

Claim 12 (original): Use of a surface coating as claimed in claim 3, wherein the deposited layer has a thickness between 1 nm and 500 nm.

Claim 13 (original): Use of a surface coating as claimed in claim 3, wherein the superficial oxide layer has a thickness between 0.1 nm and 500 nm.

Claim 14 (original): Use of a surface coating as claimed in claim 13, wherein the superficial oxide layer has a thickness between 10 nm and 100 nm.

Claim 15 (canceled)

Claim 16 (previously amended): Use of a surface coating as claimed in claim 4, wherein the element is derived from the elements selected from the group consisting of Al, Si, Ti, V, Cr, Mn, Fe, Co, Ni, Zn, Ga, Ge, Zr, Nb, Cd, In, Sn, Sb.

Claim 17 (previously amended): Use of a surface coating as claimed in claim 4, wherein the alloy contains at least two components selected from elements in the group consisting of Al, Si, Ti, V, Cr, Mn, Fe, Co, Ni, Zn, Ga, Ge, Zr, Nb, Cd, In, Sn, Sb.

Claim 18 (previously amended): Use of a surface coating as claimed in claim 4, wherein the alloy contains at least one component selected from a first group consisting of Al, Si, Ti, V, Cr, Mn, Fe, Co, Ni, Zn, Ga, Ge, Zr, Nb, Cd, In, Sn, Sb, which are alloyed with at least one element selected from a second group consisting of Mg, Ca, Sr, Ba.

Claim 19 (original): Use of a surface coating as claimed in claim 4, wherein the deposited layer has a thickness between 1 nm and 500 nm.

Claim 20 (original): Use of a surface coating as claimed in claim 4, wherein the superficial oxide layer has a thickness between 0.1 nm and 500 nm.

Claim 21 (original): Use of a surface coating as claimed in claim 5, wherein the deposited layer has a thickness between 1 nm and 500 nm.

Claim 22 (original): Use of a surface coating as claimed in claim 5, wherein the superficial oxide layer has a thickness between 0.1 nm and 500 nm.

Claim 23 (original): Use of a surface coating as claimed in claim 8, wherein the deposited layer has a thickness between 1 nm and 500 nm.

Claim 24 (original): Use of a surface coating as claimed in claim 8, wherein the superficial oxide layer has a thickness between 0.1 nm and 500 nm.

Claim 25 (original): Use of a surface coating as claimed in claim 9, wherein the deposited layer has a thickness between 1 nm and 500 nm.

Claim 26 (original): Use of a surface coating as claimed in claim 9, wherein the superficial oxide layer has a thickness between 0.1 nm and 500 nm.

Claims 27-28 (canceled)

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